



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION III  
1650 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-2029

SEP 01 2016

The Honorable Mark R. Warner  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Warner:

Thank you for your letter concerning oyster aquaculture as a recognized nutrient reduction best management practice (BMP) and the process by which the federal and multi-state Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) partnership utilizes expert panels to consider the effectiveness of all proposed BMPs.

Work is well underway within CBP by an expert panel to evaluate the water quality benefits, specifically nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment reductions, associated with a variety of oyster practices within the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. We anticipate this work will be completed soon. The panel is in the process of determining whether the proposed practices are scientifically defensible and the appropriate level of credit reductions for each practice is established, based on the panel's research and appropriate review by the CBP partnership and interested parties.

Currently, there are nearly 20 expert panels underway to inform the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load's Midpoint Assessment. All expert panels operate under partnership-approved protocols that guide the panel process, having generated more than 300 partnership-approved practices to date. However, all aspects of the partnership operations support an adaptive management approach, and the partnership is constantly soliciting feedback to improve and expedite our processes.

The panel process brings the best available science and data to bear on available practices to reduce nutrients and sediment entering our waterways, independent of private interests. The work of this panel has been consistent and diligent. In the meantime, the panel process does not limit implementation of practices prior to receiving credit from CBP.

Thank you for your ongoing efforts in support of the Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or have your staff contact Mr. Brian Hamilton, EPA's Virginia Liaison, at 215-814-5497.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Shawn M. Garvin", is positioned above the printed name.

Shawn M. Garvin  
Regional Administrator

